

Say You Saw It In

The Independent
Weekend Edition & Free Press

Real Estate Digest

Field mice, raccoons and squirrels can be a problem

It's that time when unwanted 'tenants' come looking for shelter

(This article is provided by local Realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.)

Once again, it's that time of the year to take a few minutes to protect your home from the possible invasion of unwanted house guests — of the four-footed variety.

Autumn is a popular time for furry field mice, rambling raccoons and scampering squirrels to seek out warm and cozy digs for the fall and winter. If you provide them with a means of achieving entry into your home - via your chimney, attic, garage, vents, basement or a backdoor that's been left open unintentionally - you'll have a hard time serving them with eviction notices.

While there are many humane methods of coaxing these "tenants" out of your home or catching them and re-releasing them into the great outdoors, it's obviously better to prevent any possible means of entry in the first place - saving both you and your furry neighbors a lot of stress and bother.

Where to Start

First of all, you should conduct an inspection of your home - both inside and out— for any signs of possible entry, or

any indications that you may already have "house guests". Look for large and small cracks— particularly around doorways and windows. (Mice can gain entry through holes the size of your thumb).

If you have an attached and enclosed sunporch, mudroom, garage or shed where you keep birdseed, pet kibble, potting materials or other paraphernalia, make sure any packages that might tempt wildlife are well-sealed and stored in "pest-proof" containers like tin canisters. Otherwise, you could find that your supplies have been ravaged and you'll have quite a mess on your hands. Also make sure that there are no cracks or gaps around windows or doors where animals can get in.

It's also a good idea to make sure any dangerous or poisonous substances stored in these areas are well sealed as well - just in case any of the four-footed friends do manage to gain entrance to your home through this route. (This is definitely advisable if you have pets as well. Some dogs can be incredibly nosy when it comes to substances like birdseed and fertilizers.)

Check Roof and Chimney

Using a pair of binoculars, inspect

your roof for loose or missing shingles. Animals as large as squirrels and raccoons have been known to gain entry to attics through this route and they can cause serious damage if they gnaw on any electrical wiring. Also keep in mind that they could become trapped in between the walls of your home and suffer.

It's also a good idea to dismantle an unused TV cable tower.

Before using your chimney this fall, check for signs of wildlife. After all, you don't want to harm the animal or your chimney.

If you discover some unwanted house guests roosting there, it's advisable not to try to remove them yourself. Instead, contact your local humane society or wildlife group for names of pet removal companies which will safely remove your furry or feathered friends and restore them unharmed to their natural habitat.

If you don't have a chimney cap, it's a good idea to get one installed. (But make sure there is nothing roosting there first.) Generally made of mesh and metal, these devices prevent animals from taking up residence in your chimney in the first place.

If raccoons or birds have been nesting in your chimney, you may want to have it cleaned by a professional chimney sweep once these creatures have been evicted. This will remove any bedding the animals may have installed.

Contact Local Experts

There are a number of humane methods you can use to coax raccoons out of your home (including the use of loud radios and flashlights), as well as a

number of humane ways of catching mice. Contact your local humane society or wildlife group for more information.

And while you're outdoors, check your eavestroughs for signs of nests. Twigs, leaves and other nesting materials can clog up your downspouts, preventing water from draining away from your house. Left over time, this can cause serious problems.

Also trim any branches that may provide a thoroughfare for wildlife to scamper onto your roof and invade your attic.

Loose siding can also provide a point of entry to your home, so repair any loose or damaged portions as quickly as possible.

Also keep in mind that mice love weeds and tall grass around home foundations, because it gives them the perfect place to run and hide.

Above all, check for signs of wildlife before you do any pest-proofing. After all, you want to provide these creatures with ample opportunity to get out of your home so they don't become trapped.

It's also important not to separate a mother raccoon or squirrel from her offspring. When using humane traps, make sure the animal is re-released into a nearby location so that it can readjust to familiar surroundings.

By taking a few simple precautions now, you can prevent potential problems down the road. And you won't have to wake to the distant sound of small, scampering feet in the middle of the night.



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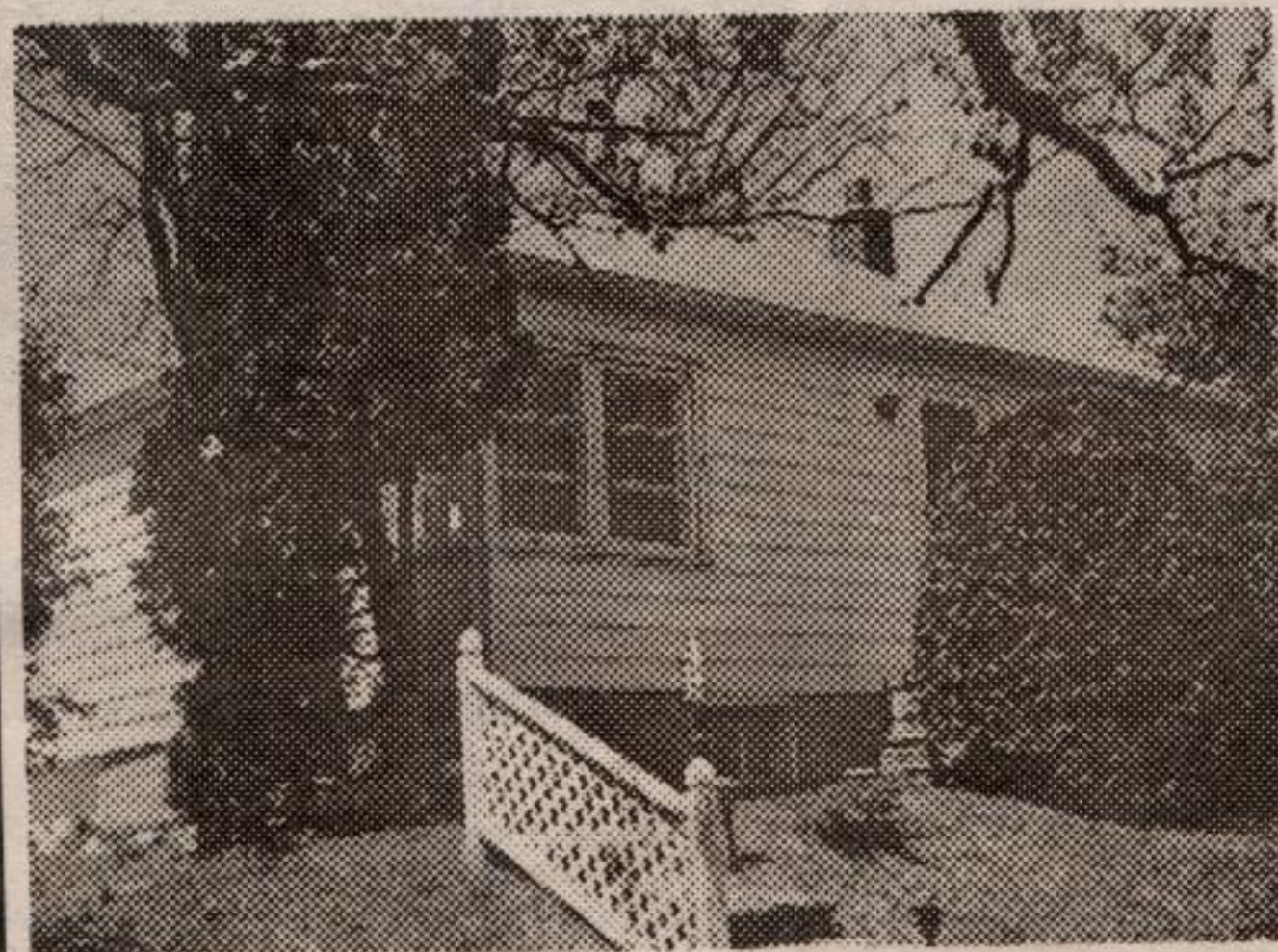


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